SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGN: AN ANALYSIS
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Abstract
The advent of communication technology has paved the way for entering democratic process into the new era. In the modern day democracy people demands information and in the field of politics the requirement of spreading large number of political information is fulfilled by the media in a greater way. Media can be used by the politicians to highlight their ideals in front of public. In comparison to print media social media is able to spread message in a very quick manner. During political campaigns the role of social media cannot be underestimated. Therefore, in this paper a study has been done on the role of social media on political campaign and also mentions some limitations of using it.

Keywords: Analysis, Political Campaign and Social Media.

Introduction: The advancement of media technology have streamlined the old process of campaigning by giving candidates more options to reach a large group of voters without too much physical effort. Media plays a very vital role in shaping peoples’ perception about politics, society and culture. Besides, the growth of internet along with its associated technologies has impacted the contemporary politics in a greater way. Internet is considered as a core component of modern day political campaign. The digital era has made everyone mostly dependent on social media in order to make regular communication with others. Every person is linked to others via social media now-a-days. For the politicians it is not possible to meet each and every person. But it is necessary for them to connect themselves with the people directly. In this regard, social media provides a fertile solution. In the present scenario using social media by various political parties during campaigning has become a vital part. Social media has been successful at reaching the younger population incredibly. Besides, to reach new target populations social media helps a lot. Social media has made candidates accountable to the voters as they can directly interact with the candidates.

Social Media & Political Campaign: An Analysis: Before the advent of social media, political parties use a large amount of money in their campaigning. But after the innovation and use of media as a tool of campaign, it has brought a drastic change in politics. Now-a-days all political parties and candidates use social media in their campaigning. The use of social media in politics indicates the use of online social media platforms in political activities and processes. Political campaign implies that system which mainly aims to promote parties, political agenda and political candidates with an aim to collect votes, to increase awareness and also to improve or increase the possibilities of winning the election. As mentioned earlier during campaign, a candidate spent lots of money which is very much crucial for a new comer. It is very much difficult for a new comer to achieve momentum at the polls without any connections to the influential donors. But social media provides the platform to the new comers also to speak directly to the people of their respective constituencies. If we observe the traditional way of communicating people by the politicians we have found that the traditional way is very different from the new mode of communication. In the past days, politicians used print media or official online newspapers or they speak via official speakers or through T.V. But in recent days, candidates are using social media like- facebook, Twitter. Facebook creates a platform where people are able to interact with each other freely. This feature of facebook also helps the political figures to promote their own ideals among public. As the goals of any political campaign the platform of facebook is also relied on formation of group and constant communication. In the arena of politics new comers have faced difficulties in accessing formal communication channels and also money has posed a challenge to
the new comers. In such a situation social media provides some rays of hope to the new entrants. Thus, in the field of politics political campaigns are growing as very much expensive and there is also an increasing need of reaching people. In this regard, social media plays a vital role undoubtedly in the process of determining the electoral outcomes by giving a platform to the young politicians.

    Now-a-days political institutions including political parties, politicians, political think tanks, foundations all are using social media as a platform in order to communicate and engage themselves with the voters. Common people, politicians and political intellectuals can able voice their opinions via social media by engaging themselves with a wide network and have able to connect with the other individuals who have same feeling and thought. The nature of political communication has changed after the use of social media as a tool to political communication due to the fact that it has provided new ways of informing and mobilizing people. Users have got the facility to connect directly to the campaign managers and with the politicians and also can involve themselves in different political activities in many ways. In social media politicians can reach out to voters easily because in social media platform there is the option of sharing, liking or retweeting political messages for the users.

    Political parties of all over the world, now-a-days, very much aware of the significance of social media in political campaign along with other traditional platforms such as newspaper and television. If any political party wants to compete with their rivalries it is very much vital for that party that the party should invest in digital marketing. The politicians of different parties across the globe can now understand the value of social media as it provides opportunity of speaking directly to the voters and have profound influence on the results of their campaign. Social media provides a cost effective platform to disseminate information related to politics in comparison to the traditional means of communication. Due to the usefulness of social media in political campaign it is said that a good social media political campaign strategy is very much needed for the success of whole political campaign.

    Media has a greater impact upon the voters while communicating to them. Media works as a tool to give spotlight to certain issues. Media is only the way which is capable of spreading campaign related information quickly to a large number of audiences. It can play a very significant role in changing voters’ perception, opinion, attitude and even behaviour. Media has an adverse affect on shaping peoples’ views about a candidate and by giving repeated coverage to certain issues it has affected the process of evaluation of candidates by the public. Media has also highlighted the issues which public should give attention and also provides information about criteria on the basis of which a candidate should be judged. During the period of election campaign voters receive most of the information either through print media or social media. By giving limited coverage to certain candidates media can profoundly influence the public. One of the discretionary powers that media has in its hand is to cover only those candidates which media feels as legitimate candidate and have a good chance of winning election. In this way, media filters and narrow-down those candidates which it feels eligible and must be known by public though it is in the hands of public which they think as viable candidate. But through generating attention media can have profoundly affect the minds of the voters. Social media allows the politician to seek information and also let them to interact and express themselves in front of others through posting various political opinions, their ideals on social networking sites. By using social media the users can also be able to express themselves politically through active engagement like making online donations, encouraging friends to vote, updating status and posting graphics on social media sites.

    Thus, social media has been widely used in all political campaigns ranging from local to presidential. WaelGhonim states that social media can reinforce the pre-existing beliefs rather than promote new ones. Several candidates are using social media with an aim to promote their own campaigns only. There is also certain risks of using social media which are not present in other traditional platforms like T.V. and newspaper ads. Here the political parties can control the messages which are not in favour of them but in case of social media campaign the opposition
party supporters and critics can post negative messages below the campaign message immediately. There are mainly three kinds of users which have profoundly influenced social media. These are those who engage other people, users who disseminate knowledge and those who lead conversations. These three kinds of users are mostly the influencers over social media and others who use social media mostly follow these three kinds of users. Thus to reach people as many as possible the political groups must require these three types of users in their hands during political campaign on social media. People have the worry that over using of social media by the candidates to win over more supporters may cause less policy making in government.

**Conclusion:** In modern democratic era, people demands information. It is in this context, media plays a very vital role by providing public information about politics, election campaigns, etc. though media provides information to the public but there is also a chance of negative coverage of issues and there also emerges the problem of media bias. Thus, the relationship between media, government and public is cyclical and media has the power to shape public opinion. There is also a wide spread belief that media has less concentrated about the public issues and does not provide a vital role in shaping political opinions. Besides, media has provided an important role in election campaigns by providing information about the issues which the public should focus and on what basis candidate should be judged. In the same way media is also used by the political parties to spread their campaign and media is also affected by the party in power and the party which is currently in the government use media as a political instrument by furthering the views which are political in nature. Thus, it can be said that the emergence of social media has changed the way of political communication.

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